

Message Text

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51

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 OMB-01 SAJ-01 MBFR-04 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 EB-11 RSR-01 /122 W

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R 041138Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7051

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

USCINCEUR

USNMR SHAPE

USDOCS AFNORTH

CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 3250

MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT NO

SUBJ: UNCERTAINTY PREVAILS ON EVE OF NORWAY'S GENERAL ELECTIONS

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REFS: (A) OSLO A-204 (B) OSLO 3143 (C) OSLO A-148

BEGIN SUMMARY. OUR HUNCH IS THAT NEXT WEEK'S ELECTIONS WILL UNSEAT THE PRESENT NON-SOCIALIST COALITION GOVERNMENT AND PERMIT THE LABOR PARTY TO RETURN OT POWER--BUT WITH A MINORITY GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL STILL BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE STABILITY FOR WHICH NORWAY WAS ONCE NOTED. THIS TELEGRAM SUMMARIZES OSLO A-204, WHICH DISCUSSES ISSUES AND PROSPECTS ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTION. END SUMMARY.

1. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ON SEPTEMBER 9 AND 10 WILL MARK THE CULMINATION OF OVER A YEAR OF UPHEAVAL IN THE NORWEGIAN BODY POLITIC. TAXES, GOVERNMENT SPENDING, THE ABORTION LAW, AND OTHER DOMESTIC ISSUES ARE CLAIMING MOST OF THE ATTENTION IN THE CAMPAIGN, BUT ECHOES OF THE COMMON MARKET DEBATE STILL RESOUND AND SERVE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, TO PREVENT AGREEMENT ON WHAT SORT OF COALITION THE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES WILL FORM IF GEVEN THE OPPORTUNITY; THE CONSERVATIVES REMAIN UNWILLING TO AGREE WITH THE CENTER PARTY THAT LAST YEAR'S REFERENDUM DECIDED THE EC MEMBERSHIP ISSUE FOR ALL ETERNITY. WARNING THAT NORWAY OUTSIDE THE EC WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY ISOLATED IN POLITICAL AND SECURITY MATTERS, THE CONSERVATIVES ALSO CHARGE LABOR (WHOSE LEADERS WERE ISSUING THE SAME WARNING UP UNTIL THE REFERENDUM BUT ARE NOW SILENT ON THE SUBJECT) WITH HAVING SOLD OUT TO THE LEFT. LABOR REFUSES TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE, HOWEVER, ON GROUNDS THAT IT IS POINTLESS TO REOPEN THE EC DEBATE UNTIL NATIONAL EMOTIONS HAVE SUBSIDED.

2. ON OTHER FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS, LABOR CONTINUES TO DEMAND STRONG MEASURES AGAINST PORTUGAL, BUT MOST NORWEGIANS AGREE AND THERE IS THUS NO DEBATE. THE PARTIES ON THE FAR LEFT ARE PRESSING THEIR PERENNIAL DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO, BUT THIS ISSUE TOO GOES UNDEBATED BECAUSE THE NOTION HAS LITTLE POPULAR APPEAL. WITH HIGH TAXES A DOMINANT ISSUE, LABOR HAS BEEN UNABLE TO IGNORE THE DEMAND OF THE LEFTIST "SOCIALIST ELECTORAL ALLIANCE" FOR A 25 PERCENT CUT IN DEFENSE SPENDING; IT HAS COUNTERED WITH A PROPOSAL FOR A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE DEFENSE STRUCTURE, TO SEE WHETHER ECONOMIES COULD BE MADE WITHOUT DEGRADING DEFENSES. LABOR'S STUDY PROPOSAL CARRIES NO COM-
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MITMENT TO CUT DEFENSE SPENDING, BUT AS THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE BEEN QUICK TO POINT OUT, THERE ARE INHERENT DANGERS IN IT--PARTICULARLY IF LABOR COMES TO POWER BUT WITHOUT A MAJORITY IN THE STORTING (PARLIAMENT).

3. YESTERDAY'S GALLUP POLL--THE LAST TO BE PUBLISHED BEFORE ELECTIONS--DOES NOT PROVIDE MUCH CLARIFICATION OF THE PROBABLY OUTCOME; IT CONTINUES TO SHOW AN ALMOST EVEN

SPLIT BETWEEN THE SOCIALIST AND THE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES, WITH A SLIGHT EDGE TO THE FORMER. THE NATIONAL TOTAL OF THOSE WHO SAID THEY WOULD VOTE WHEN THE SAMPLE WAS TAKEN (AUGUST 5-15) WAS 47.9 PER CENT FOR THE SOCIALISTS (40.1 FOR LABOR AND 7.8 FOR THE SOCIALIST ELECTORAL ALLIANCE) AS AGAINST 46.6 PER CENT FOR THE FIVE MAIN NONSOCIALIST PARTIES; THE REMAINDER IS SCATTERED AMONG THE FRINGE PARTIES ON THE FAR RIGHT AND LEFT. THESE TOTALS ARE NOT NECESSARILY MEANINGFUL, HOWEVER, BOTH BECAUSE THERE IS AN UNPRECEDENTLY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF UNDECIDED VOTERS THIS YEAR AND BECAUSE THE REGIONAL BREAKDOWNS ARE INSUFFICIENTLY DETAILED FOR ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL DISTRICTS.

4. SOME LABOR POLITICIANS ARE PRIVATELY OPTIMISTIC THAT THEIR MASSIVE EFFORT SINCE THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN IN MID-AUGUST WILL YET PRODUCE A STORTING MAJORITY. THIS WOULD BE DESIRABLE, IN THAT A MAJORITY LABOR GOVERNMENT PROVIDES THE ONLY HOPE FOR A RETURN TO GOVERNMENTAL STABILITY IN NORWAY, BUT OUR BEST GUESS AT THE MOMENT IS THAT IT IS UNLIKELY; WHAT SEEMS MORE PROBABLY, ADMITTEDLY ON THE BASIS OF VERY TENUOUS STATISTICAL EVIDENCE, IS A MINORITY LABOR GOVERNMENT. UNLIKE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ELSEWHERE, NORWAY'S LABOR PARTY REFUSES TO ENTER INTO COALITIONS; IT WOULD RULE IN A MINORITY SITUATION BY DRAWING SUPPORT FROM THE LEFT TO IMPLEMENT ITS DOMESTIC PROGRAM AND FROM THE RIGHT ON OTHER MATTERS, PARTICULARLY FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY. IT WOULD, NONETHELESS, BE UNDER CONTINUING PRESSURES FROM THE PARTIES IN THE SOCIALIST ELECTORAL ALLIANCE (WHICH MAY SEAT AS MANY AS TEN CANDIDATES THIS YEAR) ON ISSUES SUCH AS DEFENSE SPENDING.

5. SUCH GLOOMY THOUGHTS MAY, HOWEVER, BE PREMATURE; UNTIL
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THE ACTUAL VOTES ARE COUNTED, NO ONE WILL BE PLACING
HEAVY BETS ON WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT WILL BE FORMED AFTER
THE STORTING CONVENES IN OCTOBER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 SEP 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973OSLO03250
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS BUCHANAN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: OSLO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730956/aaaabpgi.tel
Line Count: 158
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: (A) OSLO A-204 (B) OSLO 3143 (C) OSL, O A-148
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12-Sep-2001 by freemaal>; APPROVED <02-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNCERTAINTY PREVAILS ON EVE OF NORWAY'S GENERAL ELECTIONS CONFIDENTIAL
TAGS: PINT, NO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005